Pam
Japan
Maxey
1156

CHRISTIANS IN JAPAN

Mark G. Maxey

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

https://archive.org/details/christiansinjapa00maxe

CHRISTIANS IN JAPAN

Mark G. Maxey

CHRISTIANS IN JAPAN

by

Mark Gregory Maxey
Kyushu Christian Mission

1958

PRICE

~~25¢ each, 5 copies for $1.00~~
35¢ each, 4 copies for $1.00

Order from

Kyushu Christian Mission
Box 139, North Vernon, Indiana

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
DALLAS, TEXAS

CHRISTIANS IN JAPAN

Mark G. Maxey

BACKGROUND

If the title seems to cover too much territory, there's a slogan long used by our people which states it better: "We do not claim to be the only Christians but Christians only."

Who are these people who claim to be Christians only? In different times and places the churches are called "Church of Christ" or "Christian Church" or "Disciples of Christ" There was a time when these names were applied interchangeably to the same people, but today, these names apply generally to three main streams of thought in the development of the "Restoration Movement."

The term "Restoration Movement" occurs frequently in the literature of the church of Christ. It explains the reason for their existence. All hail to the great reformers who gave their very lives to "reform" the corrupt church at Rome. Standing upon their shoulders and looking beyond Rome, there were others who had the vision of "restoring" the church as it was in Jerusalem, with the same simplicity and purity.

This ideal has always been alive somewhere but in America's early days many Christians put their idea into action. It remained for Scotsman Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander to state this ideal and give it life. These two men became the spiritual forbears of the present Christians, so much so that for many years they were called "Campbellites" in derision. Believing that every Christian could and ought to read and interpret the Bible for himself without the help of Campbell or others we have resisted the efforts to be branded with a party name or to hail the Campbells as the founders of a new religion or sect. This was the farthest thing from their purpose or ours.

Still it can be fairly said that the present brotherhood of Christians had its start from the Year 1809 when Thomas Campbell left the Seceder Presbyterian Church, having been censured by them for ignoring party views in the churches and for his liberalism in admitting Christians of various views to the Lord's Supper. Deeply grieved at the bitter divisions of the day he and a number of others formed the "Christian Association of Washington County, Pennsylvania." His "Declaration and Address" to that group was the "mag-

na carta" of the restoration becoming an ecclesiastical document of historical importance.[1] Running to 30,000 words it developed 13 propositions which may be summarized as follows:

1. The unity of the church of Christ
2. This unity can be maintained even though there is congregational diversity
3. The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice.
4. The New Testament is the supreme authority for Christians
5. All human authority is disallowed in the church
6. Deductions and inferences from the Bible are not binding upon Christians
7. Opinions cannot be made a test of fellowship
8. The only creed of the church is faith in the divine Christ
9. All who accept this creed and live by it are brothers in Christ
10. Sectarian divisions among Christians are un-Christian
11. The cause of such divisions is the neglect of God's word and the introduction of human innovations
12. The cure for such divisions is the restoration of the New Testament church
13. Human expedients in the church, when permissible, are not to usurp the authority granted to the Scriptures. 2

These propositions are eye-openers even today but in 1809 they were revolutionary. Alexander Campbell who arrived from Scotland just at this time found himself in agreement with his father's thinking he soon eclipsed his father and became the head of the movement.

Even the Campbells themselves did not forsee where these principles would lead them. When Alexander's first child was born the question of infant baptism arose. He and his wife studied the Bible together and agreed it was without scriptural warrant. The same study led them to question the validty of sprinkling as Christian baptism. A short time later they asked a Baptist minister to immerse them in the waters of Buffalo Creek following their simple confession of faith in the words of Peter: "Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God."

Not wishing further division they first sought fellowship with the Presbyterians and then with the Baptists. Differences developed with the latter and separation became complete about 1830. At this time these people were called "Reformers" or "Disciples", the latter preferred by Campbell. In Kentucky, Barton W. Stone had traveled the same path out of sectarianism and headed a movement of "Christians", The beliefs and ideals of the two groups were so similar that the two leaders met in 1842 and joined forces.*

* Those followers of Barton W. Stone who did not unite formed "The Christian Church", sometimes called "Christian Connection". Later this group joined with the Congregationalists to form the Congregational Christian Church. This June the latter joined with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ.

From this time on, the Restoration was launched as a national movement and swept the middle west. For over a century it averaged a new church per week established. No final decision on the name was ever reached but a church was generally called a Christian Church or a Church of Christ. The 1909 Pittsburg Centennial Convention officially adopted the name: "Disciples of Christ" largely used by offialdom and in print. Local congregations seldom if ever use it.

While the Christians were growing with great vigor they were slow to restore the New Testament teaching and practice of missions. Campbell himself questioned missionary work as carried on by current missionary organizations. At first opposed to all such, he later softened his attitude and became the first President of the American Christian Missionary Society formed in 1849. Along with work at home, missionaries were sent to Jerusalem, Jamaica and Liberia. Support was poor and the work unsuccessful.

EARLY HISTORY IN JAPAN.

In 1877 the Foreign Christian Missionary Society was formed and the first call was for recruits for Japan. In 1883, the 24th year of Protestanism in Japan and the year the translation of the New Testament was completed, the first two missionary couples arrived. They were the George T. Smiths and the Charles E. Garsts. Captain Garst was a West Pointer who received his commission from General Grant and During 8 years of frontier duty during the Indian wars he had dreamed of doing missionary work. He loved the Japanese and took an active interest in their welfare, politics, taxation as well as their faith. When he died in Tokyo in 1898 he was greatly mourned.*

These two families soon left the treat ports and settled in the city of Akita in the prefecture of the same name on the northwest coast of Japan. The Disciples have a work there to this day. The first convert after a year of labor was hailed with great rejoicing and a day was set apart for prayer and thanksgiving. Very shortly thereafter Mrs. Smith and infant son died there and were buried in a Buddhist cemetary at the edge of the city.

We are not attempting to list all the missionaries who labored in Japan nor to give their work in detail. Our object is to trace the development of the missionary work noting especially those who pioneered and brought about new patterns of work.

In 1892, another group of missionaries came to Japan led by W.K. Azbill. Mr. Azbill had served as a board missionary in Jamaica but had become convinced that self-supporting mis-

* His wife later wrote a biography of her husband entitled "A West Pointer in the Land of the Mikado."

sionaries, independent of any society's supervision was the scriptural method. He brought out two groups of missionaries who supported themselves largely through teaching English doing a creditable work.

MISSION WORK OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (non-instrument)

Of the many missionaries that Mr. Azbill brought out, Mr. and Mrs. John McCaleb were outstanding. He labored in Japan for 42 years. His autobiography, *Once Traveled Roads*, is the thoroughly enjoyable story of a man of conviction and principle typical of the early missionaries who came to Japan. In 1897, Mr. McCaleb refused to attend a Fourth of July celebration in Tokyo saying on a postcard to the committee: "Our citizenship is in heaven." For this the U.S. Minister refused to re-issue his passport until he took the oath of allegiance to the U.S. McCaleb refused. The Minister refused. The Japanese Government finally got McCaleb a passport direct. Yes, there were "giants in the land in those days."

Mr. McCaleb believed that it was wrong to use instrumental music in public worship. Ever since 1859 a debate had been going on among the Christians as to the rightness of a number of expedients in the churches. The use of instrumental music in the churches and the use of organized missionary societies, were the two main points of contention. Those who opposed were called "Conservatives", while those who said that these things were matters of indifference were called "Progressives". The controversy became more acrid until in 1906 the "Conservative" group reported for the first time as a separate group, "Churches of Christ."

Today, to identify these different groups by similar terminology, you might say the "Disciples of Christ" represent the liberal or left wing of the Restoration movement; churches known either as "Christian Churches" or "Churches of Christ" and emphasizing direct support missionary work as against missionary organizations represent the conservative or center, and the "Church of Christ" represents the ultra-conservative or right wing of the movement. Sad to say, the people who champion Christian unity the loudest do not generally practice much unity or fellowship across the loosely defined borders outlined above.

In Japan the Church of Christ has always maintained a strong work. In many ways it's a more rounded work than either of the others. Like other groups, they have made rapid strides since the war especially in the development of Ibaraki Christian College in Omika, Ibaraki-ken. Harry Robert Fox, 2nd generation missionary, who, with his brother is associated with the college gives this summary:

"Altogether we have 45 active churches throughout Japan, 37 of which have church buildings and paid for. The remaining eight churches are either meeting in rented halls or in private dwellings. In addition to the 45 which we consider to be churches are twelve groups meeting regularly in private homes which are still too underdeveloped to be considered as churches. The total membership in all of our churches is between 1500 or 2000.

The 45 churches are distributed as follows: Tokyo - 4; Yokohama - 3; Shizuoka ken - 5; Nagoya - 1; Tochigi ken - 1; Fukushima ken - 2; Kyushu - 1; Ibaraki ken - 26; Yamanashi ken - 2.

Altogether there are 31 Japanese preachers serving these churches together with 15 American missionaries. In addition, there are twelve (12) more Japanese young men preparing themselves to be gospel preachers in a special three-year course of study at Ibaraki Christian College.

Institutions among us are as follows: (1) Ibaraki Christian College, a fully accredited high school and Junior College with a total enrollment of 600 students on a 35 acre campus in Omika with land and buildings worth $250,000. (2) The Children's Home in Nakada, Ibaraki ken, caring for 54 orphan children; (3) The Nazare-en Old Folks Home in Urizura, Ibaraki ken caring for 60 old people." [6]

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST. *

The work of the Disciples of Christ is carried on under the auspices of the United Christian Missionary Society. It was formed in 1919 to combine all existing agencies into one group. About this time the problem of modernism arose to plague the Christians as it did so many other groups. Charges of radical missionaries, practice of comity, open membership, waste and extravagance made the Society a center of controversy among our people and eventually a division over support of the organization arose. The Society retained the support of a majority of the brotherhood at that time and continues to be the official agency of the Disciples of Christ. Cooperation with denominational work is emphasized; comity is a fundamental policy; social service and education commands a major share of the budget; and the number of missionaries doing evangelism often compares unfavorably with those in other kinds of activities.

The first station opened was Akita followed by Tokyo in 1890. Writing of the move to Tokyo, the President of the Foreign Society said:

"It was believed that a mission with its headquarters in the capital would have a prestige that it could not have otherwise . . . The plan adopted did not work out as well as it had been hoped." [7]

---

* At their 1957 convention the Disciples voted to change the name to: International Convention of Christian Churches.

Probably many other mission boards could add the same footnote concerning their plans to evangelize Japan from its capital city.

The society extended its work to Sendai, Fukushima and Osaka. A large tract of land was bought in Takinogawa, a suburb of Tokyo and in 1903 Drake Bible College for the training of preachers was started. Middle schools started in 1905 and 1906 were other institutions on this site.

The preacher training school continued until 1923 when it was closed in favor of a union school, in keeping with their world-wide policy. The present list of institutions on foreign soil lists no preacher training school operated solely by and for the Disciples. The last missionary report of the Disciples lists no ministerial students in Japan.

In 1940 the Disciples had 7 missionaries, 13 pastors, 19 churches, 2666 members and 35 baptisms. In 1955 there were 21 missionaries, 220 nationals, 14 churches, 24 places of regular meeting, 95 baptisms, and 1206 members. The 1956 Year Book report combines statistics with the Kyodan* but lists 38 churches under the heading "Disciple-Related, Japan". 8

On October 17, 1940 these churches, after numerous conferences, joined the Kyodan. This action was officially confirmed by "A Commission on Friendly Inquiry" which came to Japan in September 1954 and by the action of the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ which met in Miami the following month.

The 1956 Annual Report of the United Christian Missionary Society reads:

"Our work in Japan must be reported from the viewpoint of its relations to the total Protestant Christian movement, and especially, but not exclusively, that major part of Protestant work known as the (United) Church of Christ in Japan. We are now an integral part of the United program in view of the facts that: (1) Our historically United Christian Missionary Society-related congregations have, of their own volition, been members of the United Church since its pre-war formation; (2) The integration of our Japan Mission into the Interboard Committee for the Christian Work in Japan which resulted from the report of the Commission on Friendly Inquiry of 1954.

Our two schools, while operating under their own autonomous

*The Kyodan is the United Church of Christ of Japan, a union of denominations formed during the war. It has a formal creed and practices open membership.

Boards of Directors, are linked with the seventy-three other schools in the Christian Education Association. Our Social Welfare institution (East Tokyo Institute), in like manner is a unit in the Christian Social Work League, with its seventy member agencies.

In regard to the churches themselves, together with the dozen or so kindergartens and other activities that they maintain, it would be misleading to speak of them as "our" churches because they consider themselves a part of a movement in Japan for the unity of God's people that comprises all of the 1450 congregations in the United Church. Within this great fellowship they are happy to be making their witness to their Bible-based beliefs, without any arrogant assumption that their understanding of the Bible is superior to that of others.

During the year three new chapels have been erected with Society help: one of them at Honjo, in far north Akita Prefecture; one in East Tokyo called North Asakusa Church; one in Kashima, on the Pacific shore in Ibaraki Prefecture, where the famous Kashima Shrine holds sway over the lives of the people, like the temple to Diana, at Ephesus of old.

The Christian High School for Boys, called Sei Gakuin, in Tokyo, erected one of the largest and most modern auditoriums of any similar school in Japan to replace its chapel lost by fire in 1954. This new addition to the physical plant has given added prestige to the school and has given the student body a deeper respect for the place of their daily chapel services.

The Girls' High School, Joshi Sei Gakuin (Margaret K. Long Memorial), with over a thousand students, celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary in November, 1955. (Sei Gakuin had a similar celebration in 1956.)

The Centenary Program of Evangelism, piloted by the National Christian Council of Japan, is challenging heightened endeavor toward personal witnessing and the strengthening of the Church. Our twenty missionaries, each in his own way, whether in teaching, preaching, counseling, social welfare, planning, organizing, personal witnessing, music, or various special activities all serve as units in the one united enterprise of bringing Christ to the attention of the Japanese people." [9]

As with the Church of Christ, relations with the missionaries of the Disciples is cordial but fellowship between Kyodan-related Churches and other Churches of Christ is non-existent.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS - DIRECT SUPPORT

Quite often the term "independent" is used for missionaries not sent out by any missionary society. The term is not entirely suitable, however, since these missionaries are "dependent" financially and spiritually on like-minded brethren at

home. The term "direct support" fits better since they receive their funds directly from their supporters.

The first direct support missionary of the Christian churches* in Japan was Loduska Wirick who came to Tokyo in 1891 supported by a Bible Class in Des Moines, Iowa. She continued a faithful work until her death in Tokyo in 1913.

The W.D. Cunninghams, founders of the Yotsuya Mission in Tokyo, were really the first to introduce direct support missions to our people on a nation-wide scale. Their work demonstrated that direct support missions can be dependable, permanent and productive.

The Cunninghams first applied to the Foreign Society to do missionary work in Japan but soon after Mr. Cunningham had an attack of infantile paralysis. After four subsequent physical examinations the Society's doctor pronounced him unfit for foreign missionary service. At this one of Cunningham's friends told him: "Cunningham, if I were you, in your condition, I should regard the voice of the missionary organization as the voice of God. I should feel absolved from all obligation to go to Japan." Cunningham replied: "But it isn't His voice. God's voice is calling me to go. To me your words sound like blasphemy." [10]

In that day, even as now, probably nothing makes a man of faith see red quicker than to hear the voice and authority of a missionary organization, or any organization, equated with the voice and will of God.

Cunningham raised some support among the churches and they came on to Tokyo. They further supported themselves by teaching English in government schools. They did a wholehearted work in Tokyo and attracted 17 other missionaries to work with them. Their published reports at home aroused nation-wide interest in Japan and in this method of missionary work. Mr. Cunningham died in 1936. Mrs. Cunningham returned to her old home in Yotsuya and remained active until her death in December 1953.

Three ladies who left the Cunningham mission went over to the Mabashi district of Tokyo and began a work in November 11, 1934. Of these three, Miss Farnham still remains in Mabashi where there is a fine church. Miss Schoonover returned after the war and settled in Tanabe of Wakayama ken where

---

* THIS WRITER FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT "CHURCH OF CHRIST" IS THE PROPER BIBLICAL NAME FOR THE CHURCH JUST AS "CHRISTIAN" IS THE PROPER NAME FOR AN INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER. I DO NOT WANT TO MAKE A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP ON THE POINT, HOWEVER, DIRECT SUPPORT MISSIONS IS SUPPORTED BY ABOUT AN EQUAL NUMBER OF "CHURCHES OF CHRIST" & "CHRISTIAN CHURCHES."

she died shortly after. Then Miss Lemmon returned to Japan and, working with the pastor, has carried on a fine work.

The second direct support work called the "Osaka Christian Mission" was started in Osaka in 1919 by Mr. and Mrs. M.B. Madden who spent 40 years in Japan. They did an excellent job of evangelism with the Foreign society since 1895 serving in Akita and Fukushima prefectures. He became irked, however, at the frequent change of stations. Particularly, he felt called to lead the work in Sendai to more maturity. When his pleas in this regard went unheeded, he resigned and, after the First World War, started the work in Osaka. The work was centered around a kindergarten, night school, and the planting of churches. Five churches were organized up to the time of the war.

In 1937, Harold Cole, who had joined the work, opened the Osaka Bible Seminary. It was re-opened after the war and continues as a highly successful preacher-training agency.

THE WAR YEARS

We would like to write a thrilling story of how the churches withstood the pressure to enter the Kyodan and maintained their worship services in spite of the privations of war and the loss of their buildings. Unfortunately, such is not the case. Stephen Iijima, now of the Tokyo Bible Seminary, and a young minister during the war years, says of those days:

"As you know the only building left in Tokyo was that of the Setagaya Church where Mr. Hanyu ministered. All the others were lost. Our main interest is not in the buildings; yes -- but the fact that when these buildings were lost, the churches were also mostly lost -- this fact tells us something for us. During the war, soon after the missionaries left this country, some Japanese pastors whom the Yotsuya Mission hired by money from other denominations at that time tried to sell the Mission properties or appropiated them for their own profit. Mr.———— and Mr.———— are two of these. Some left the Mission, (this small and peculiar denomination according to their expression,) to run to the larger where they might have expected to be able to have much more opportunity for promotion. For example, Mr.————. Mr. Hanyu was luckily free from the trouble, being in the Army.

But Mrs. Hanyu and Mrs. Kadomura (Mr. Kadomura was the Yochomachi Pastor, but died in the battle) tried to preserve their husbands' churches all right, and took the Kyodan examination successfully to become the approved or authorized pastors. Naturally they joined the Kyodan, knowing not what it meant.

It is not our business just to blame them for it, but we should see

with good discernment where the problem lies. First thing is this; all the ministers and pastors at that time were occupying their positions as mere professional religious priests in this DENOMINATION. They just happened to choose this denomination out of many. They understood our plea as a Denominational Appeal. So it was quite natural to make our Plea or the New Testament Teaching second to the actual necessity, that was then to join the Kyodan organization to survive (to survive on Earth, in earthly meaning.) Because for them it was the most important matter to survive in the earthly religious body . . .

"An episode that I can not forget for the last ten years is this; when I was still at Setagaya helping Mr. Hanyu as assistant minister there, the Missionary body in Tokyo took the problem in their conference if the Setagaya church ever joined the Kyodan. When I was in the church office, Mr. Hanyu came in and told Mrs. Hanyu to hide the rubber stamp of the church that had the title of the Kyodan saying, "Setagayan Church of Christ, Nippon Kirisuto Kyodan."

"His reaction was a strange one to me even at that time. And I began to think of it more and more deeply. In it every shallow and weak conviction of the Japanese pastors is seen. They work well or at least they can make themselves seen as good workers by the missionaries so far as it is so-called peaceful time. But it is a different matter if they remain the same when they are to stand alone with Christ for His Work.

"I praise the Lord to know that it was a few lay-Christians (I don't use this term usually, but now according to the ordinary usage) who were used as the Lord's new means to restore His Church again after the war. Elijah's Lord is the same Lord of us now. He always keeps some in His hand for His own use, in spite of our despair. Mrs. Tsujio, Mrs. Hoshi, Mrs. Nikaido, etc." [11]

Another source says:

"Of the Yotsuya mission, all but one of the churches ultimately entered the united church over the protests of Mrs. Cunningham and the Stills. No vote was taken in these churches over the matter; it was decided by the Japanese pastors. Mrs. Cunningham said:

> "Many of our members were opposed to it, but were helpless to do anything. The members did not know they were in the Union until I discovered it and told them. They discharged their minister, but they were in the Union and couldn't get out."

"The one church not joining the church of Christ in Japan was not fully organized, but was still free and meeting regularly when Mrs. Cunningham left in June, 1942."

"The Osaka churches had not gone into the union at the time the missionaries left . . ."

"The Mabashi Church of Christ continued until September, 1942, independent of the Kyodan, and the pastor continued services in his own home even after that time." [12]

"In Osaka the war brought a complete loss of buildings and most of the membership was lost by death and dissemination."

THE LAST DECADE

The great post-war resurgence of missionary interest in American churches was also felt among the Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. Also the difference in practice and principle between the liberal element of the Disciples that dominated the United Christian Missionary Society and the conservative element of the churches that wanted to support their missionary work directly was now clearly defined. No formal separation has taken place nor is such likely since there exists no ecclesiastical machinery to bring it about. Churches of Christ and Christian Churches forged rapidly ahead in a wide-spread missionary program. They entered 86 new fields post war. In 1955 they had 463 direct support missionaries on the field, almost twice as many as the 245 "Disciple" missionaries.

Japan received a major share of missionary interest. Many former service-men returned for a better and higher type of service.

There are today 45 missionaries, directly supported, in Japan. In Hokkaido they are located at Obihiro and Sapporo; on Honshu, at Sendai, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Hirakata (Osaka fu), Tanabe (Wakayama ken), Kutsugi (Okayama ken); in Kyushu, at Kagoshima City, Kanoya, and Nishinomote, on the island of Tennegashima. One family is in Shikoku.

For purposes of support and geographical identification the missionaries by groups have selected these individual mission names:

1) Church of Christ Cunningham Mission
2) Christian Missionary Fellowship
3) Christian Radio Mission
4) Hokkaido Christian Mission
5) Japanese Christian Mission
6) Kyushu Christian Mission
7) Mission To Japan
8) Mabashi Christian Mission
9) Nagoya Christian Mission
10) Osaka Christian Mission
11) Shikoku Church of Christ Mission
12) Tanabe Christian Mission
13) Tohoku Rural Evangelism

Of these missionaries 16 are occupied in the training of a ministry in connection with Tokyo Bible Seminary and Osaka Bible Seminary. Here the Bible is the chief text book. Indigenous principles are taught and an indigenous church is held out as the goal though we claim no more success in bringing it about than others.

15 missionaries are working in the cities or engaged in language study; 14 are in rural or village evangelism and one in radio evangelism.

These missionaries have a fellowship which is remarkable for any mission field. Coming from diverse areas, churches and training institutions they made their own way to Japan.

Looking for fields where others were not working, they found their own places of labor. Though tied together by no organization they form voluntary associations to accomplish their missionary objectives. While placing themselves under the authority of their sending churches and reporting regularly to them, they neither seek authority over others nor wish others to be over them. They exchange leadership, teaching responsibilities, teaching materials and evangelistic efforts. Such a voluntary fellowship helps eliminate some of the tensions which may arise when the fellowship is of necessity.

The missionaries work in close fellowship with 33 pastors and 10 lay leaders in 49 congregations and 13 preaching points. Membership is conservatively estimated at 1500. There are 19 students training for the ministry.

The churches are congregational in government and autonomous. Each local body selects its own elders and deacons and calls its own pastor as soon as they're able. Fellowship and cooperation is voluntary. The church itself is considered to be sufficient organization to carry out the Lord' s work.

Once a year the churches gather for a convention, each year in a different place. The host churches arrange the program. These meetings are for fellowship and inspiration. Other than selecting a place for the following convention, no business is conducted and no officers elected. There are no rules and by-laws, no delegates and no pronouncements on how the world's problems may best be solved. The missionaries have an annual convention on the same terms.

This may sound like anarchy in print but in practice it proves a workable way to have fellowship in love and harmony (and an occasional fiery discussion). Of course there are those who prefer to stay at home and work alone and that's their privilege. None are penalized.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

An early slogan of the Christians said: "In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; and in all things charity." That philosophy governs most of our relationships together. There is no effort to stamp every mind into the same mold. Diversities of opinion are the rule not the exception. But when a man begins to elevate his pet idea into a matter of faith, he usually finds that no one is listening.

Local congregations regularly ordain for the ministry those of their young men who are qualified and wish to dedicate themselves to the Lord's work. No titles, mystical powers or special privileges accompany this laying on of hands, however. In America, Christian ministers, as a general rule, prefer to be Called "Brother", "Mister" or "Just Plain Bill" instead of "Reverend" and "Doctor" which set apart one as a "man of the cloth". Things are different in Japan, however, and Japanese preachers will be called "sensei"* with all the rights, privileges and distinctions pertaining thereto long after this missionary is dead and buried.

In a more practical way than most we believe in "the priesthood of all believers". Any believer may lead a service, preach a sermon, pronounce the benediction, conduct the Lord's Supper or baptize. Generally these things are done by the minister, elders or deacons but it need not be so. In most of our churches the Lord's Supper is conducted every Lord's Day by the elders and deacons exclusively though in Japan the pastor may be in charge of the service in keeping with his "sensei" role.

We have our weaknesses too. Like most Japan churches, the churches tend to become paternalistic, dominated by the pastor. Our social consciousness is not highly developed and though there are frequent notable examples of giving to those in need, yet we do not share spontaneously as often as we should.

We must confess too, that as a group we haven't distinguished ourselves either for the support of the church or the ministry. After more than 50 years of work in Japan, we have only a few churches that pay a pastor a living wage out of their own giving without resort to the income from a kindergarten or other business. I say this to our shame.

We also lack in power and perseverance in prayer; holiness and spirituality; a consuming zeal for evangelism; and a real concern for the unity of God's people. While holding up the

* This is the title by which all Japanese teachers and preachers are known.

ideal of restoring the New Testament church we must admit to our own failure to live up to the light that we have.

In regard to matters of faith, Christians believe without reservation that Christ is the Son of God. They believe that the Bible is divinely inspired and accept it as their only rule of faith and practice. From the very first they have said, "No book but the Bible, no creed but Christ."

Recently a group of evangelical missionaries in Japan met to discuss a basis of participation for the Protestant Centennial. They found such a basis in the statement: "We believe in the Bible as the fully inspired, infallible Word of God, the only rule of faith and practice." Amen, to that! Campbell himself could not have said it better. In fact, that is almost exactly the way he did say it. This is the basis of fellowship that we have always championed.

In spite of our poor showing we are still pleading for the unity of all of God's people. There may be Christians at home who light-heartedly exclaim that we need competition in religion as we do in business but nobody on the mission field believes it. It has taken a great many years but most Christian leaders are now ready to proclaim division for the sin that it is.

In this connection, we have felt that Bible names for Bible things is an important contribution in itself to the cause of unity. For 150 years now our churches have had inscribed on their doorways a scriptural name, non-divisive, honoring the founder of the church. Now the Christian world is coming to agree that this is the only name on which Christians can unite. So we see in America, "The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ". "The United Church of Christ" and in Japan a great number of churches using the same scriptural words in their title (Kirisuto Kyokai) including the Kyodan denomination itself. We can but rejoice in the widespread use of this name believing that other scriptural practices will follow in its train.

We believe that both baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the church, commanded by the Lord himself and of great importance to the believer. We attach no miraculous significance to either. The Lord's Supper is observed as a memorial. Though we are sometimes accused of believing in "baptismal regeneration", both the terminology and the theology are foreign to us. We do, however, take exception to the fundamentalists' "only believe" theology in regard to salvation. In this case,the fundamentalists outdo the modernists by ignoring the Scriptural teaching on baptism. Sometimes they spiritualize the passages but usually the whole matter is dismissed as of no importance. We believe that baptism is an

act of obedience duplicating the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. This, along with faith in Christ, repentance of sins and a public confession of faith brings us "into Christ". "Saved", "converted", "born again" are terms the scripture uses without the special interpretations put on those words today.

For many years, we were ridiculed along with the Baptists and a great many others for holding that immersion was the proper mode, but now that versions, translations and copies of the original Greek are available in such profusion, no longer does any serious Greek scholar question the fact that this is the mode indicated by the Greek of the New Testament. The justification for affusion is usually made on other grounds.

In regard to other believers, we wish to be called "Christians" but we "do not deny that others are Christians or that other churches may be Churches of Christ". We believe that there exists everywhere true men and women of God obedient to His commands and blessed by Him. We have much to learn from all those truly serving Christ. We seek fellowship with them as far as they will allow and as far as our loyalty to God and His Word will permit.

We freely acknowledge our debt to those other servants of God who have given us Christian liberty, the Bible itself as we have it today, much of our knowledge about the Bible, and the great hymns of the church, to name only a few.

While we are not "joiners" and have a natural distrust of organizations and "official" action as being effectual in carrying out the Lord's will on earth, yet we are willing to work voluntarily as individual Christians with others on projects and causes that will advance the Kingdom of Christ.

Last winter a missionary friend in Kobe approached me with a statement that went something like this: "Say, Maxey, what are you anyway? You say you're a "Christian" but you don't seem to fit any catagory that I know of." I considered that a compliment. A long time ago, a pioneer Christian preacher answered the same sort of inquiry this way: "Our peculiarity is that we have no peculiarities."

Our hearts desire is to be simply Christians in the fullest and most scriptural sense and our hope is that all of Christ's followers will do likewise leaving the human names, creeds, opinions and denominational loyalties that divide and defeat us.

FOOTNOTES

1. Mead, Handbook of Denominations, p. 69.
2. Kershner, Restoration Handbook, p. 16.
3. 1956 Year Book of Disciples of Christ, p. 818.
4. Newland, Directory of the Ministry, p. 130
5. TIME, August 5, 1957, p. 46.
6. Personal letter on file.
7. McClean, Foreign Christian Missionary Society, p. 201.
8. Year Book, op. cit., p. 230
9. Ibid., pp. 232-233.
10. Cunningham and Still, The Flaming Torch, p. 27.
11. Personal letter on file.
12. Carr, Foreign Missionary Work of the Christian Church, p. 146.

SOURCES

Carr, James B. The Foreign Missionary Work of the Christian Church, St. Louis, John S. Swift Co., 1946.

Cunningham and Still The Flaming Torch, Kingsport, Tenn., Kingsport Press, 1939.

DeGroot, A.T. Church of Christ Number Two, England, The Birmingham Printers, Lrd., 1956.

Ford, Harold W. A History of the Restoration Plea, Oklahoma City, Semco Color Press, 1952.

Harvest Field, Athens, Alabama, Bible Book Store, 1947.

Japan Christian Yearbook, Kyo Bun Kwan, 1954 and 1955.

Kershner, Frederick D. The Restoration Handbook, Cincinnati, Ohio, The Standard Publishing Co., 1918.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott, The Great Century, Europe and United States of America, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1941.

McCaleb, J.M. Once Traveled Roads, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate Company, 1934.

McClean, Archibald The History of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919.

Mead, Frank S. Handbook of denominations in the United States, Nashville, Tenn., Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951.

Newland, Vernon M. A Directory of the Ministry, St. Ann, Missouri, 1957

Welshimer, P.H. Concerning the Disciples, Cincinnati, Ohio, The Standard Publishing Company, 1935.

World Survey of Christian Missions, Joliet, Illinois, Mission Services, Inc., 1955.

Year Book of the Disciples of Christ, Indianapolis, Indiana, International Convention of Disciples of Christ, 1955 and 1956.

TABULAR VIEW

Item	Church of Christ or Christian Church	Church of Christ (Does not use instrumental music in worship)	Disciples of Christ (Kyodan-related)
MISSIONARIES (including wives)	45 (All directly supported by a church or churches)	15 (same)	20 (All supported by the United Christian Missionary Society)
JAPANESE PASTORS.	33	31	Unknown (174 nationals reported for total program)
CHURCHES	49	45	38
PREACHING POINTS	13	12	? (52 places of regular meeting)
CHRISTIANS	approx. 1,500	between 1500 and 2000	Unknown
CHURCH BUILDINGS	33	34	38 ?
KINDERGARTENS	4	?	10
BIBLE COLLEGES	2	1	(union schools only)
STUDENTS TRAINING FOR MINISTRY	19	12	0